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## **AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT ADDENDUM**

### **USH 14/61: Viroqua to Westby Vernon County Wisconsin Department of Transportation Project ID#: 1646-07-01 Publication Date: June 27, 2008**

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On November 7, 2001, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) published an Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) for the proposed reconstruction of U.S. Highway (USH) 14/61 in Vernon County. This project includes the construction of a two-lane bypass east of Viroqua, a two-lane bypass west of Westby, and the widening of existing USH 14/61 between Viroqua and Westby to four lanes.

In the original AIS, one of the farm parcels that will be affected by the widening of the highway was omitted. This parcel is owned by Rodney and Wendy Johnson. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation WisDOT is proposing to acquire 3.26 acres in fee-simple<sup>1</sup> and 0.18 of an acre of temporary limited easement from the Johnsons. The proposed acquisition will also include the Johnsons' house, barn, and photo studio. The Johnsons' property is located in section 5 of the town of Viroqua T13N-R4W on the west side of USH 14/61 just south of where the Westby Bypass begins.

WisDOT anticipates acquiring the needed Johnson land in the fall of 2008 and construction of this portion of the project is expected to start in 2011.

Rodney and Wendy Johnson own 15 acres of land including 8 acres of cropland that is used to grow corn. The remaining land includes pasture and the area around the buildings. The Johnsons run a 45-cow dairy operation. Rodney Johnson also sells registered Holstein cattle and Holstein breeding services. Wendy Johnson runs a photography studio on this property.

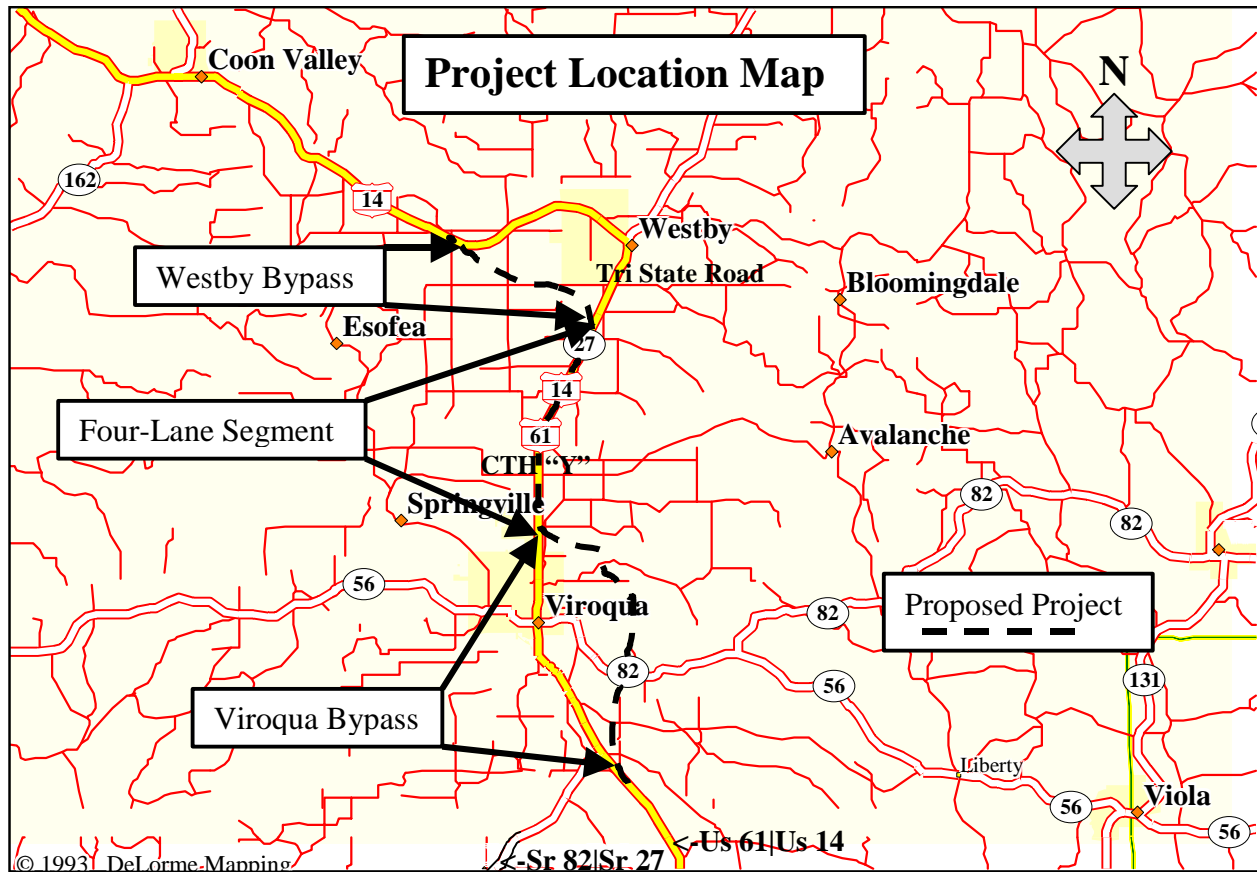
The proposed fee-simple acquisition represents 21.7 percent of the Johnsons' property. Rodney Johnson said that the location of the property is advantageous for both livestock selling and the photography studio. Having direct access to the highway allows customers to find them easily and it is also convenient for transporting their bull. Although their buildings will be included in the proposed acquisition, the Johnsons would like to remain on their property after the highway is expanded. They have not found a dairy farm in the area for sale that has the types of functional buildings they need.

WisDOT has indicated that if the Johnsons choose to keep the remaining parcel, access will continue to be provided from USH 14/61. However, if the Johnsons decide to sell the entire parcel to WisDOT, access to the remainder of this property will be relocated to Smith Road.

Rodney Johnson indicated that there is a grassed waterway along the northern boundary of the property. The proposed project will also affect the drain field for the milk house and the septic systems for the

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<sup>1</sup>A fee-simple acquisition means that the buyer purchases exclusive rights to the property. This is in contrast to an easement where a buyer purchases partial rights to property.



house and photography studio. Mr. Johnson is concerned that the loss of land could create manure management and runoff problems on the remaining parcel. He said, however, that maintaining the farm operation on the remaining land is doable.

Most of the soils on this farm are Downs-Tama silt loam with 2 to 6 percent slopes-moderately eroded. There are also smaller amounts of Downs-Tama silt loam with 6 to 12 percent slopes-moderately eroded and Worthen silt loam with 0 to 2 percent slopes.<sup>2</sup>

Downs-Tama silt loam is found on broad ridgetops. These soils are well drained and deep. Natural fertility of the Downs soils is high. Permeability is moderate and the moisture supplying capacity is high. The water table is at a depth of more than 5 feet. These soils are suited to row crops, small grains, and hay. Where the slopes are 2 to 6 percent and moderately eroded, this soil erosion has removed all but 6 inches of the original surface layer. The remaining surface layer has been mixed with subsoils through plowing. The hazard of additional erosion is

<sup>2</sup>Soil Survey of Vernon County, USDA Soil Conservation Service in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, Soil Survey Division, and the

Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station, October 1969, sheet 55, pp. 42, 43, and 61.

slight. This soil is classified as prime farmland and it is included in capability class IIe-1. Where the slopes are 6 to 12 percent and moderately eroded, only 3 to 6 inches of the original surface layer remains as a result of erosion. Cultivation has mixed the upper part of the subsoil with the plow layer. This soil is included in capability class IIIe-1.

Worthen silt loam with 0 to 2 percent slopes is well drained to moderately well drained, deep soil. It is found in narrow upland drainageways. Natural fertility is high, particularly the nitrogen content, and the organic-matter content is high. The moisture-supplying capacity is high. Flooding occurs during periods of heavy rainfall or of heavy runoff from adjoining uplands. However, the hazard of flooding is slight. This soil is suited to all of the crops commonly grown in the county. It is classified as prime farmland and it is included in capability class I-1.

DATCP continues to support all of the recommendations that were made in the original AIS. They are as follows.

1. WisDOT should consult with farmers and landowners to ensure that new and relocated driveways, field entrances, and median crossovers are placed in safe and efficient locations for farm use.
2. The county conservationist should be consulted to ensure that construction proceeds in a manner that minimizes drainage problems, crop damage, soil compaction, and soil erosion on adjacent farmland.

3. WisDOT should maintain the cattle pass on the Orlan Holte property as long as he needs it to move livestock across the highway and consider providing a cattle pass for William Rogers.
4. All farmland owners and operators should be given advance notice of acquisition and construction schedules so that farm activities can be adjusted accordingly. To the extent feasible, the timing of the acquisitions and construction should be coordinated with them to minimize crop damage and disruption of farm operations.

DATCP also recommends that WisDOT allow Rodney and Wendy Johnson to continue living and working on their property after the highway is expanded as long as their businesses can remain viable. If the Johnsons determine that they are unable to maintain viable businesses, DATCP recommends that WisDOT compensation should cover not only the loss of land and buildings, but also the excellent location and ease of customer access.

*Additional copies of the original AIS or this addendum are available at no charge by calling (608)224-4646.*